

GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, October 10, 2007 – 4:00pm
Smith Senior Center – 2401 Fairview Street

PRESENT: Paul Brown, Marc Bush (arrived 4:07), Ken Free, Lori Galbreath, David Hoggard, Rose Marie Ponton

ABSENT: John Beaman, Jr., Randy Scott

STAFF PRESENT: Larry Barham, Adrienne Byrd, Steve Branson, Candice Bruton, Kathy Cates, Johnny Galbreath, Ron Harris, Courtney Hemphill, Cindy Hipp, Darryl Holsey, John Hughes, Darryl Kosciak, Bonnie Kuester, Dan Maxson, Mike Moye, Brooks Mullane, Darious Oliver, Tracy Pegram, Eddie Pugh, Marcie Richardson, Mike Simpson, Tim Thilo, Chris Wilson, Craig Wilson

OTHERS: Dick Faucette (Field Operations Department), Goldie Wells (City Council)

The regular meeting of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission was held at Smith Senior Center. David Hoggard, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the September 12, 2007 Commission Meeting were approved as submitted with the correction that John Beaman, Jr. was present.

Recognition

Bonnie Kuester, Director, recognized the Parks and Recreation October Employee of the Month, Kathy Cates.

Smith Senior Center Presentation

Cindy Hipp, Seniors Coordinator, presented the Commission with historical information about Smith Senior Center and programs currently held at the center.

OLD BUSINESS

Hope Project

Darryl Kosciak, Youth First Coordinator, stated that the Hope Project is a community wide collaboration of agencies and services with a focus on youth gangs. The initial objective began in summer of 2005 laying the foundation to bring together community agencies that are already working across the community organizing plans for youth who are struggling with this issue. We have also investigated what communities are doing across the country regarding community outreach.

Kosciak stated that this summer Parks and Recreation received a grant from the Guilford County Community Collaborate in the amount of a full-time Community Outreach Worker. Ron Harris, former Brown Recreation Center Director, has been hired for this position and will begin efforts to move into the next phase of the Hope Project.

Kosciak stated that shortly before the meeting he was approached by an individual that he had been working with for some time who said to Kosciak that he has a drug problem and wants help. Kosciak and this individual then went to the person's school counselor to begin the process of contacting services who can help. Community Outreach Workers will begin assisting with these types of issues, developing relationships and making a connection to services and agencies in the community.

Parks and Recreation Naming Facility Policy

Bonnie Kuester stated that during the last few months the Commission has had opportunities to approve recommendations of naming facilities that came before the Commission in a quick manner. Parks and Recreation has always had a naming policy and it has been revised several times. In the process of going through those namings it was brought to Kuester's attention that perhaps the policy should be reviewed once again. A subcommittee of the Commission was formed and met with staff to review the policy. Suggested revisions were made and the Commission has been given a copy of the policy noting the revisions. Kuester asked the Commission to review the policy and recommended revisions. This item will be discussed at the next Commission meeting.

2008 Commission Meeting Locations

Kuester stated that during the Commission meeting last month it was recommended that all Commission meetings be held at one location. Historically the commission met at different locations, then for a number of years had the opportunity to hold meetings in one location in the City Council Chambers, which is when we started rotating meetings to 4:00pm or 6:00pm. The opportunity to meet in the City Council Chambers ceased so we began meeting again at different facilities. The Parks and Recreation Department did the rotation to start with years ago so that the Commission would have the opportunity to see our facilities, allow staff an opportunity to talk to the Commission about events and programs at those facilities and the convenience for citizens who reside close to meeting locations. Kuester stated that meetings will continue to be held on the second Wednesday of every month and we have found that there is a great deal of success in the 4:00pm and 6:00pm rotation. In terms of location, that's a decision of the Commission.

Ponton stated that she does not know of a place that is central other than the City Council Chambers. Since this location is not an option Ponton supports meeting at different locations. Ponton mentioned that along with maps that are distributed to the Commission showing meeting locations, there is also a map in the Parks and Recreation Leisure Guide.

Lori Galbreath stated that she doesn't disagree with the fact that we certainly would like to see our facilities. Galbreath's concern is the time it takes to get to the meeting locations. The 4:00pm meetings are very consuming trying to get from point A to point B in a short period of time. Galbreath stated that even when given maps you still have to try to figure out where the center is and sometimes the maps are not accurate because of road changes. Galbreath stated that she will go with what the Commission decides and attend as many meetings as she can. Galbreath requested specific and accurate directions to meeting locations.

Ken Free stated that he likes the meetings at one place, but will go with what the Commission decides.

Kuester stated that the Commission will be provided with specific directions.

Marc Bush stated that he greatly values the meetings being held at the recreation centers.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Rose Marie Ponton and seconded by Paul Brown to continue to rotate Commission meetings among Parks and Recreation facilities as currently being done. The Commission voted 4-2 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Brown, Bush, Hoggard, Ponton. Nays: Free, Galbreath.)

At this time Hoggard recognized the attendance of Councilperson, Goldie Wells.

Nominating Committee Report

Hoggard stated that this presentation will be presented by Paul Brown.

Brown reported that the nominating committee consisted of 3 Parks and Recreation Commission members, Paul Brown, David Hoggard and Randy Scott. The nominating committee recommends David Hoggard to be appointed as the Commission Chair and Randy Scott as the Commission Vice-Chair.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Marc Bush and seconded by Ken Free to approve the nominating committee recommendations. A vote in favor was unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS

Vandal Deterrent System

Brooks Mullane, Program Support Supervisor, stated that unsightly and sometimes obscene graffiti and vandalism is taking place on underpasses, sides of buildings, at Parks and Recreation neighborhood playgrounds, regional parks, cemeteries, and more. Vandalism and graffiti has come to the point where we have to do something about it. The vandal deterrent system is one answer Parks and Recreation has been exploring. Mullane stated that all Commissioners have been given a copy of the vandalism report, which includes dollar amounts spent due to vandalism and graffiti. The total cost is over \$113,000 the past 11 years. It's a continual problem that takes manpower and resources and it doesn't look like it's ever going to stop.

Mullane continued stating that vandalism and graffiti is not site specific. Playground equipment seems to be a popular choice for vandalism. Graffiti on concrete requires pressure washing to remove it, which costs manpower, fuel, and remover. Shelters have had to be repainted. Graffiti in some locations have been removed so often that equipment has been permanently damaged. There has been fire damage to playground equipment; however the mulch doesn't burn. Wooden picnic tables are a constant subject to arson attempts and are being replaced with plastic coated metal tables.

Mullane mentioned the following vandalism issues that have occurred:

- A vehicle drove through a parking lot onto a practice field through the back stop and shots were fired.
- A crawl tube from a playground was vandalized in July 2007 and it was reduced to the point where it was just plastic.
- Once graffiti took place on equipment at one location, parents wrote on the same equipment "do not destroy our park".
- Signs that were paid for and placed by Housing and Community Development were ruined that spoke to 4 different languages will most likely have to be removed.
- Bullet damage to a trail sign that will eventually have to be replaced.

Mullane continued stating that some of the obscene language that is written is very shocking and small children are seeing this language on playground equipment.

Mullane presented a powerpoint that included photos of vandalism and graffiti in Westbury Park, Greenfield Park, Woodlea shelters, Arlington Park, Heath Park, Burling Road, Woodmere, Greenhaven Park, Rosewood, Sussman Park, and Trails.

Mullane informed the Commission that we have been trialing a vandal deterrent system that is motion censored and will come on at dusk and off at dawn. A bright light flashes once to catch the vandals attention and then again to

capture his/her photo on camera, which then deters them away from the park. It is also voice activated and can be programmed to say words of choice, such as "Stop! You are in a restricted area. Your picture is being taken and downloaded to the police department". The system has to be mounted at least 16-18 feet above the ground. The case that it resides in is bullet proof up to a 9mm and has a lifetime warranty. We began using the deterrent system on a trial basis beginning September 11, 2006. The Field Operations Department assisted with moving the system to different locations. The system was shared between Heath Park and Steelman Park. A neighbor of Heath Park reported that the system really worked as a deterrent. A neighbor of Douglas Park stated that he and his wife felt the safest that had in years while the system was up.

The police department has had repeated problems with graffiti in the underground garage in downtown Greensboro and used the deterrent system in that area. The entire time it was being used they didn't have any problems with graffiti.

Brown inquired if there was any damage done to the deterrent camera and is there a policy on time restrictions for removal of graffiti.

Mullane replied stating no damage has been done to the camera and graffiti is normally removed within 24 hours, 48 hours at the latest. With the water restrictions in place we are sensitive to the use of water when using the pressure washer. Graffiti and vandalism has declined drastically since the start of school. This summer was probably the worst summer we've ever experienced with vandalism and graffiti.

Rose Marie Ponton inquired about neighborhoods having neighborhood watches.

Mullane replied stating that a lot of our neighborhood parks do have neighborhood associations and/or community watch programs. The police department is working on re-writing the ordinance that deals with private property that has had graffiti damage to shorten the time that graffiti can be there.

Ken Free suggested placing a graffiti board as an activity feature in parks.

Mullane stated that we have thought about that and this has been done in other cities; however it's not going to curb the gang graffiti as they mark their territory.

Bush stated that this past summer a lot was heard about gang activity.

Mullane stated that she sends photos of all graffiti to the police department so that they can determine whether or not it is gang related.

Mullane stated that the deterrent systems cost \$6,000 each. Currently we own one which is being used at the Bog Garden. Parks and Recreation will be purchasing two more systems. Other departments have expressed an interest in purchasing possibly three more systems. The systems will be switched between different locations with hopes of eventually having enough systems to permanently locate in our most troublesome parks.

David Hoggard stated that this would be an opportunity for the neighborhood small grants program.

Chris Wilson stated that there are some in attendance of this meeting who represent several Parks and Recreation facilities. Parks and Recreation has worked very closely with the Police Department and this system gives them a good lead, such as license tag numbers, picture, etc. This system also gives people who are fixing to make the wrong choice the opportunity to make the right choice. We would like to continue pursuing this system and want to make sure that each department brings it forth to their respective board or decision making bodies' attention. This is something that could be an answer to many facilities.

Brown suggested that if there is one area of the city where a lot of vandalism is taking place then that criteria should be used for these added cameras so that they are placed in those areas. Brown also suggested, although expensive, having a stakeout after the removal of graffiti and clean up from vandalism, or perhaps a watchman to move around the park going to different areas or maybe to different parks.

Mullane stated that a lot of this activity happens during the evening when our employees are off work and aren't around as a natural deterrent. This is why we try to get the communities involved as the communities and neighborhoods have a presence in the parks.

Lori Galbreath stated that regarding gang activity the Police Department needs to be involved even with neighborhood residents as deterrents. Galbreath stated that neighbors are in danger and to say there is a neighborhood watch or someone who can watch out is not enough; if they are not armed I don't see the value in it.

Mullane stated that this was brought forth to the Commission today as awareness of the issues we face and that we are working towards resolution or at least not having these issues so prominent. Mullane requested the Commission to endorse this system.

Free stated that the community needs to be educated and that he has seen situations in broad daylight.

Brown commended Mullane with her efforts on this issue.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Rose Marie Ponton and seconded by Paul Brown that the Parks and Recreation Commission endorse the work that is being done to alleviate all the vandalism and graffiti in our parks. A vote in favor was unanimous.

Pool Pals Recognition

Darryl Kosciak, Youth First Coordinator, recognized the sponsors of the Pool Pals program, which is a program where Parks and Recreation solicits business sponsorships in the community in order to open three city pools one day a week at Peeler, Windsor, and Warnersville Recreation Centers. This year we had a record setting attendance of 3,213, almost a 750 person increase from last year. Kosciak commended the lifeguards and their staff for their efforts with welcoming kids and reaching out to the community.

Kosciak announced Kristen Barbee as a new employee of Folk Teen Center and recognized Ron Harris, new Community Outreach Worker.

Kosciak informed the Commission of the Youth First Teen Summit held on October 31, 2007 at the Greensboro Coliseum. Middle and High School students across Guilford County are invited to attend.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

- NONE -

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Bonnie Kuester, Director, stated that Parks and Recreation is interested in citizens enjoying their free time and benefiting from what we have to offer in terms of open space and programming. Over the years we have taken the opportunity at some level a social service aspect in that we have many dynamic and creative staff who is taking a

lead in this community making sure young people don't get misdirected, but when they do we do whatever we can to help them get back on track. Kuester stated she is proud of the staff we have in this room and throughout the department and what they are doing to save young people in this community. Working closely with the Police Department has been our philosophy over the years and that together we can make a difference in this community. Kuester stated that often times she believes young people are much more willing to work with Parks and Recreation staff to redirect their lives as opposed to going to the police or social service agencies because they don't want their friends to know they're in a certain program. Our staff has the opportunity to have young people feel comfortable in our settings and be redirected at all levels in our programming as well as in the parks. Our staff continually on a daily basis has as much contact with our community and our citizens as any other department in the city. Kuester stated that she says all this with a lot of pride.

Kuester continued stating that the Parks and Recreation Department is going to have to do something regarding vandals as it's costing so much to fix what is vandalized during a time we have to watch our dollars very closely.

Our department has been recognized so often for the variety of programming that we have and the uniqueness of what can happen in Greensboro because of the support of the community, of our elected officials, and our Commission. Kuester thanked the Commission for their commitment and support to the department.

Kuester informed the Commission of upcoming Parks and Recreation events.

Kuester stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission Annual Report is located in their packets.

Rose Marie Ponton inquired as to what counts as attendance in the Youth and Community attendance report. Ponton also stated that during the Citizen Board Member Forum it was mentioned that Charlotte trains young people on golf course maintenance and maybe this is something that would be proactive for our young people and an idea for different types of training at our recreation centers.

John Hughes stated the attendance record reflects any activity at the facility.

Kuester called on Mike Simpson, Watershed Parks and Trails Supervisor, to speak.

Simpson stated that in 2005 the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department along with Action Greensboro received a substantial grant from Moses Cone Wesley Long Community Health Foundation to conduct a trails and greenways master plan which was well over \$200,000. This grant was used to hire Greenways, Inc. from Durham, NC to conduct the master plan. It is a very comprehensive plan that took 18 months to complete. Candice Bruton deserves a majority of the credit for that effort. On September 28, 2007 Parks and Recreation and the Department of Transportation was recognized by the Institute of Government in Chapel Hill by the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association as the recipient of the 2007 Marvin Collins Outstanding Planning Award in the category of Comprehensive Plan in a Multi-jurisdictional Setting for the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Greenways Master Plan. Simpson stated that we are eligible for a national award now that we've been recognized at the state level.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Paul Brown inquired if Robert Douglas, III, previous Commission member, was recognized for his time served.

Hoggard replied stating that he was recognized during the previous Commission meeting.

Rose Marie Ponton commended the work that's being done to our playgrounds. It's unfortunate to spend millions of dollars putting in new equipment and having to spend money to keep it enjoyable because of vandals.

Marc Bush stated that he is gratified for the Parks and Recreation Commission and staff regarding the vandalism and graffiti as it's a struggle to get to a level where this issue can be controlled.

Bush highly commended Tracy Pegram and the Bur-Mil Park staff for their efforts with the Cycle NC event. Bush stated that he attended every over night stop across the state and the job from the Bur-Mil Park staff, the facility and organization was the best overall. Bush stated they rode 474 miles in seven days.

Wilson added that there were over 1,000 in attendance. Several participants were bussed to downtown Greensboro which added to our economy.

David Hoggard stated that he received an email from City Council regarding the fields at Smith High School and concerns about soccer games being conducted during late hours.

Hughes stated that this is a group from restaurants who leave work at 11:00pm, run the league, and play 2 games a night. The particular night in question involved a tournament taking place late at night and people were cleaning up the fields during early hours of the morning. Hughes stated that we will work with them in the future to schedule tournaments earlier whether at Smith or other locations.

Hoggard stated that he and his wife ate at Gillespie Golf Course at Master's Grill and it is a wonderful restaurant.

With no further business Hoggard adjourned the meeting at 5:23 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Richardson, Executive Assistant
Greensboro Parks and Recreation